

THE LEISURE HOUR.

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"BEHOLD IN THESE WHAT LEISURE HOURS DEMAND,—AMUSEMENT AND TRUE KNOWLEDGE HAND IN HAND."—COOPER.



C. H. SHEERES
BETSY TAKES ME INTO HER CONFIDENCE ABOUT WILLIAM BIX.

GEORGE BURLEY;

HIS HISTORY, EXPERIENCES, AND OBSERVATIONS.
BY G. E. SARGENT, AUTHOR OF "ADVENTURES OF A CITY ARAB."

CHAPTER VII.—MY UNCLE WILLIAM.

"WHAT are you thinking of, Hurly?" demanded Betsy Miller, suddenly looking up from her work. This was on the evening after the occurrence mentioned in my last chapter.

I was thinking of my uncle William; and I told Betsy so.

"You hadn't ought to be thinking about him. He

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is not worthy of it. He is a bad man, Hurly," said she.

"I cannot help thinking about him, Betsy," I rejoined; adding an impertinent question—"Were you not thinking about him too?"

"That's different," replied Betsy, quickly. "I have got a deal to think about that shouldn't come into a little head like yours. Wait till you are older."

"I can't help thinking—how can I, now?" I wanted to know.

"You should think of good things and good people; but I suppose that's too dull work for you. Anyway,

William Bix is a wicked man, and the less you think about him the better for you."

This might be very true; but then, if I could not help thinking about him, I could not. I stated this view of the case to Betsy very strongly, and it puzzled her.

"I have seen uncle William before to-day," I remarked, presently.

"What do you say, George Burley?" asked Betsy, in a tone of alarm, mingled with such stern reproof that I hastened to apologise and explain.

"I couldn't help it, could I, now?" I pleaded, when I had told of my former meeting with my uncle in Mr. Filby's shop, and what had passed there.

"And why did not you tell me of this before?" she demanded.

"Because I left off thinking about him till I saw him again to-day," said I. "That was right, wasn't it?" I asked, laughing at having turned the tables on my reprobation. Betsy Miller, however, did not see the point of my retort.

"No; it wasn't right," she rejoined. "You ought to have told me, and then I should have guessed what I had to expect; and, if you ever come across that man again, and he dares to speak to you, mind you tell me every word he says, Hurly."

"So I will, then," I promised; "but what makes uncle William such a bad man?"

"What curious questions you ask, boy! What makes him bad? Why, what makes other people bad? What does the Bible say about it?" I should remark here that, thanks to Betsy Miller and her teachings, I had learned to read pretty fluently by this time, and that the Bible was our principal reading-book. "But I see what it is," added my teacher; "you want to know the meaning of what you saw and heard this morning. Very natural, Hurly, but not proper."

"Why not proper, Betsy?"—so I went on.

"Because there's a deal that goes on in the world that little boys oughtn't to know."

This was bravely said by Betsy Miller. Nevertheless, I could judge by certain signs, which were intelligible enough to me, who had unconsciously studied my chief companion of the last four years, that Betsy was uncertain whether or not to take me into her confidence, but that the inclination to do so preponderated. According to my custom in such cases, therefore, I dropped the subject, and began to talk about something else.

The innocent ruse succeeded. Betsy got more and more fidgety, till presently she returned abruptly, of her own accord, to William Bix.

"What a dreadful wicked man that uncle of yours is, to be sure, Hurly," said she.

No response.

"You would like me to tell you all about him, now, shouldn't you?"

"You said it wouldn't be proper, Betsy."

"No more it would be for you to know all. Dear me! As if all could be known that bad people in this world do!" (this by way of interjection). "But it will be a warning to you, Hurly, to know a little of what your uncle has done." And, with this introduction, Betsy plunged at once into the following narrative:—

CHAPTER VIII.—THE HISTORY OF A REPROBATE.

"It was more than nineteen years ago that I came to live here at Silver Square along with your grandfather, bless him! It was the best move I ever made in my life, Hurly; for, as I have told you often and often, I

had been knocked about like a shuttlecock between two battlements, till there wasn't much life left in me. But master was pleased with my looks, and I was pleased with his, and I was pleased with the place, and pleased with having no missus set over me; and—there, you know all about it. I begun a new sort of life, and here I am now.

"When I first came, your grandfather had been a lone gentleman six or seven years, and had been terribly put upon and robbed by a wicked maid-servant, who left at a day's notice, and might have been took up and tried for what she had done, only master was merciful, and didn't treat her as she deserved; and why I tell you of this is because it comes partly into your uncle's story. A young slut she was—not that I was very old myself at that time—but it wasn't her youngness, but her wickedness. My dear, I am not going to tell you all that was found out about that creature, so don't think it; but her name was Sarah Warner. Warner, indeed! I'd have warned her.

"To go on with what I was saying. There was your poor grandfather, all lonely, and badly cut up in his mind, one way and another; and there was your dear precious mother, who was about fifteen years old at that time; and she was the very best young person I ever knew: so gentle and good, Hurly, as you would have known well of your own knowledge if she had been let to live. But that wasn't to be. And I little thought, when she went away into the country for a holiday, that it was to go on to a marriage, and end in a death; but that was to be, you see."

"You have told me about that very often, Betsy," said I, interrupting my good friend: and so indeed she had; and as the upshot of her reflections always went to prove how much happier my mother would have been, and how much longer she would have lived, if she had not married my father, I had felt myself getting inwardly rather restive under the infliction. It was very well in Betsy to cry up my dead mother: I had no objection to that; but she need not have cried down my dead father, so I thought, in my childish way. I think that Betsy guessed what was passing in my mind, for she said hastily—

"You are right, Hurly; it is your uncle's story I began upon, and not your mother's. He was about thirteen years old—William Bix was—when I first came here, and a very handsome boy he was, too, to look at: bright sparkling eyes, curly black hair, and such a pleasant, merry manner with him. You would not think it now, would you?"

No, I should not have thought it. I could not have imagined that the haggard, wretched, brutalized-looking man whom I had that day seen, had ever been a pleasant, merry, blooming boy.

"But he was, though," said Betsy Miller, when I expressed my surprise. "He had lost his innocence when I first knew him, but not his innocent looks. It takes some time to get rid of them," continued she; "but be sure of this, Hurly, as sure as ever men or boys, women or girls, make up their minds to be downright bad, and give themselves up to it, the face begins to alter, and keeps on altering till there is not a bit of the old look left. And another thing, Hurly: the more like angels they might have been in beauty, the more like devils they come to be in ugliness."

How solemnly Betsy said this I am not able to write down; I can only remember it, the more vividly because, strange as the remark seemed then, I have so often in later years observed the same thing, that I am convinced of its general truth.

"Yes, Hurly," continued Betsy, "your uncle was a handsome boy, and uncommonly proud of him his father was, though, as I have told you before, your mother was his great favourite. But he loved William so well that he would not believe anything wrong in him. Wrong enough there was, however. I never reckoned myself sharp-sighted after people's faults; but what are you to do, you know, when they blaze out before your face? And that's what William Bix's faults did. It didn't take long to let me into the knowledge that Sarah Warner, who had been living with your grandfather over five years, had been at work, turning all that might have been good in the boy into evil. Oh dear! it frightens me now to think of the awful depths of wickedness there were in that poor boy's heart; he let it out sooner than he would have done, I dare say, because he thought I must be such another as his old teacher and tempter. And when he found out that it wasn't so, he had said and done too much to blind me."

"It was Sarah Warner, then, who made uncle William so wicked," said I.

"It was, and it wasn't, Hurly. She hadn't made Miss Mary—that's your mother—wicked. 'Tis my belief"—here Betsy's voice dropped almost to a whisper, and her low tone became very solemn—"tis my belief that Sarah Warner was set on by the devil, or one of his agents, to corrupt both them young people; but one of them prayed to be delivered from evil, and also resisted the devil, and the other did nothing of the sort. So you see, Hurly, there was blame and sin all ways, and sorrow enough, you may be sure.

"As to what William Bix did to show his badness," continued Betsy, "for one thing, he was the most out-dacious story-teller I ever knew. There was no believing a single word he said; he would stand, and look you in the face, so open-like and innocent, and say that black was white, or white black! If you had even seen him do a thing, and he knew you had seen him, not a bit of difference did it make to him; if it suited him to deny it, deny it he would, and almost persuade you that he hadn't done it. Then, he used the most awful words; dear, dear! I have put my hands to my ears many a time, to shut out the sound of his wickedness, and my flesh has been all of a creep while he was standing by, as bold as brass, with his mouth full of cursing, as the Bible says. And as for thieving, there was nothing that came in his way that he wouldn't lay hands on if he took a fancy to it. I soon found that I must lock up everything, especially money; if I didn't it was sure to be gone. And locking up did not do either; for he found out how to pick locks, or got false keys, and that was the first thing that opened your poor grandfather's eyes to your uncle's wickedness."

"Didn't you ever tell of him, Betsy?" I asked, not unnaturally.

"Tell of him! Yes, I did, Hurly. I told of him so often that I very nearly lost my place by it. Your grandfather wouldn't believe any harm of William. It was all my jealousy, he said. And then the boy would put on such a smooth face to his father, and make believe to be so innocent, and stand out so boldly for his being in the right, that all I got for my pains was to be told that I had prejudiced myself against the poor motherless boy, and wasn't to take any more stories about him to his father, otherwise I might find another place where there was not a boy to be in my way. After that, my mouth was shut, you see; and all I could do was to join with Miss Mary—your mother, Hurly—in trying to mend the young rebel; but he only laughed at us, my dear, and dared me to tell any more stories about him.

"At last, the time came when your grandfather's eyes were to be opened, Hurly, whether he would or not. It was when your uncle William was about seventeen years old that it happened. But I must tell you first that he had had a good education, and was very clever too. Learning was no trouble to him; and as he took care to mind his behaviour at the great city school where he went every day, and wasn't very sharply looked after, perhaps, by the masters, he left with a decent character, I believe, only, as I have heard, he was so well known for his want of truthfulness that he got the name of 'Lying Bix' among his schoolfellow, which wasn't a pretty name to be called, was it? Otherwise, he passed in the crowd, I dare say, as many a clever, wicked person does for a time; but only for a time, Hurly, mind that. There comes a finding-out time, sooner or later.

"When your uncle left school," continued my informant, "he could write a beautiful hand, like copperplate print, almost; they told me, too, that he was a famous Latin scholar, and maybe he was. I have heard some people say," observed Betsy, after a pause, "that all you have got to do to keep folks from going wrong is to give them school-learning. It isn't any such thing, Hurly. Learning is good when there's good use made of it, of course it is; and I'd have you get as much as you can, my dear; but it is only good when there is a good use made of it, mind that. It won't keep people from being wicked if they mean wicked; it only helps them on in it, and makes them more mischievous than they would have been, just as it has your uncle William.

"Well, he came from school, and was bound apprentice to a doctor. And then he began to show more openly what he was in his heart. He found out a set of other young men, as wild as himself; and they led one another into all sorts of wickedness almost. There was one wickedness, however, that he did not give in to, and that was drunkenness. He did not take to that till years afterwards, when he grew desperate and left off caring what people thought of him; then he began to drink, and took a liking to it, as you have seen, Hurly.

"But if he wasn't a drunkard he was a dicer; and that was as bad, or worse," Betsy went on.

"What is a dicer, Betsy?" I asked, interrupting her,

"A gambler, Hurly; a man that plays at dice and cards, and such games as you know nothing about, and need not want to, for money; sometimes losing and sometimes winning, sometimes cheating and sometimes being cheated."

I was as wise now as I had been before, and very little wiser. I made no further remark, however, and Betsy went on with her story.

"Many is the time I have sat up till twelve and one, and two and three o'clock in the morning, to let in my gentleman after he had been spending the night in play of this sort, and all the while he was pretending that he had been kept up all night mixing medicines or seeing patients. You may be sure that he could not go on so without spending a deal of money, and, if he couldn't get it by fair means, he would get it by foul. And so it was he got found out at last: he robbed his master, and he robbed your grandfather by means of the false keys I told you of. There was a pretty to-do, you may be sure. His master was for having him sent to prison as a thief, but your grandfather could not bear the thought of such a disgrace, and so he made up to the doctor what he had been robbed of. As to master William, he made believe to be so sorry for what he had done, and promised so faithfully not to

do so any more, that he got forgiven. There was no going back to his master, though; and, as nothing else could be done with him then, he led an idle life at home, for three years and more, doing nothing useful, but lots of things on the sly that he ought to have been ashamed of, you may be sure.

"I cannot tell you how often his father had to pay his debts, and to pay money that wasn't debt, to get William out of trouble; nor how many people he deceived and robbed in one way or another (Mr. Filby was one of them). At last, however, when his poor father was driven almost out of his mind to know what to do, he wrote the whole story of his wicked son, and sent it to Mr. Falconer, to ask his advice. And what do you think Mr. Falconer did, Hurly?"

"I don't know. What did he do, Betsy?"

"Why, he came all the way from—from wherever his home is—hundreds of miles beyond the sea, and, after he had done and said all he could to comfort your grandfather, he took your uncle William in hand. What passed between them nobody ever knew; but the end of it was that, when Mr. Falconer went back again to his home, after stopping in London a month, he took William away to live with him, hoping that, when he was separated from his old bad companions, he would mend."

"It was very good of him," said I.

"Of course it was, Hurly; and, if William Bix had had a bit of gratitude in him, he could have been turned from his wickedness then, one would have thought. And it was hoped that he would—at least, his father hoped so, for he made the loveliest promises. And, indeed, for two or three years it seemed as though these promises would be kept, for he sent beautiful letters home, and also Mr. Falconer wrote to say how steady William had become.

"But it was all of a piece with your uncle's former doings, Hurly. He was only laying by for more mischief, and mischief came at last.

"One day, eight or nine years ago, Mr. Falconer suddenly came across the sea to London, when he wasn't in the least expected; and the minute I opened the door at his knock, I knew by his looks that something had gone wrong with William Bix. And something had gone wrong. I told you just now, Hurly, what a nice hand he wrote. Oh, he was clever, he was! Well, would you believe it? he had learned himself to write so like Mr. Falconer that hardly anybody could tell the difference; and when he thought he was perfect in it, he wrote Mr. Falconer's name to some papers—some money papers, you understand—and got them changed away for money, lots of money, Hurly—hundreds and hundreds of pounds—and then ran away with it."*

"Where did he run to?" I asked.

"Nobody knew for certain; but Mr. Falconer was not far off from right when he guessed that he had found his way back to London; for in London he was, and in London he was found, after a good deal of searching, among his old set of wicked companions, living like a prince on the money he had brought with him. He had not shown his face in Silver Square, you may be sure of that; but here he was made to come to give account of himself to Mr. Falconer and your poor dear grandfather, who was more dead than alive.

"What they said to one another I never knew," continued Betsy, "for they were shut up together, them

three, in the great drawing-room, for more than two hours. At last they all came out into the hall; Mr. Falconer was leading your poor grandfather by the arm, and half supporting him, while the tears were running fast down his cheeks—your grandfather's, I mean—and he was sobbing as though his heart would break. After them walked out your uncle, as bold as brass, with a wild scornful brightness in his eyes, though his cheeks were pale enough. There wasn't a word said, Hurly; but your uncle walked straight to the hall-door, let himself out, and shut it after him. Then Mr. Falconer led your grandfather away to his own room, and there they sat together all the rest of the day.

"Your uncle never came back again, at that time nor afterwards, till this very day, as you saw him. And after a little while your grandfather began to get more like his old self again—but never quite—no, never quite; and it is my belief that a sight of William Bix, like as he was to-day when he came here, would be the death of him. A mercy he wasn't in the house when your uncle came; and a mercy Mr. Falconer had the dealing with him. He won't come again directly, I'll warrant."

"But, Betsy," said I, when it seemed as though she had come to the end of her story, "you told uncle William that you could send him to Newgate if you liked."

"And so I could have done, and so I can do now if I have a mind, Hurly; but this is what you wouldn't understand if I were to tell you, perhaps," said Betsy, with an air of conscious superiority which she sometimes naturally assumed towards me. I fancy, moreover, that she thought she had been communicative enough for one time. At any rate, she drew the line at this part of the history, and began to extract from it the obvious moral, for which I was not unprepared; namely, that sorrow is sure to spring, sooner or later, from sin; that whatsoever a man sows, that shall he also reap, and that the way of transgressors is hard; and that, when talents, and opportunities, and education are misused and abused, they become a curse to the possessor and to the world, instead of a blessing.

Many years afterwards, however, I came to understand what Betsy Miller's hint about Newgate meant; and I may as well put it down here. It was, in effect, as follows:—

Mr. Falconer remained some days in London after the distressing meeting just mentioned; and before he recrossed to the Continent he had a private interview with Betsy Miller.

"You have some regard for your master, I think, Mrs. Betsy," said the eccentric man.

"A good deal, sir," said Betsy.

"Right. I am glad of it; and I can tell you he has a high esteem for you. And, as that is the case, I presume you are not likely to leave his service for some time to come?"

"No," said Betsy, "unless he turns me away."

"Good again. Now, about that unhappy lad. I shall leave you in charge to protect your master from him. You know what he has been doing."

Yes, Betsy knew this; and she knew that, if the young profligate were not restrained by fear of consequences, there was nothing he would hesitate to do. She knew this, and quite expected that he would some day, sooner or later, be the ruin and death of his father. All this she fully believed and acknowledged in the course of the conversation that followed. But what could she do to prevent it? If William would come to his father's house, and rob him and bully him out of his money and his life, like a highwayman, as he was only fit to be, how could she prevent it?

* I tell this story as it was told to me. I have since understood, however, that the forgery of Mr. Falconer's name was upon a London bank, which brought the crime within cognisance of English laws. But the loss was Mr. Falconer's, as he made good to the bankers the amount they had paid away.

"It shall be in your power to put a stop to it at any time, my good friend," said Mr. Falconer, "if you have only courage enough to act up to my directions when he intrudes."

"I'll do anything you tell me, if it is for my master's good," said Betsy, boldly.

"Listen, then," returned Mr. Falconer. "The young man has robbed me, you know, to the amount of five hundred pounds. I care nothing, or little, about the loss, as far as I am concerned; and, though I might recover some of the plunder, I shall not attempt to do it. It will all be spent soon enough, no doubt; and there will be the end of it. But I have got a paper to which he forged my name, and he knows it; and he knows, too, that it is in my power to transport him for life, for that forgery. Now, I have passed my word to him that, for his father's sake, I will not prosecute him, on condition of his leaving the country, and never troubling my good friend Mr. Bix any more with his presence. Well, he has left the country. He sailed for America yesterday. I saw to that. So, for the present, your master is safe from personal annoyance. But I have no faith in the young man's promises, and I am afraid that, when he has spent all the money he has with him, he will find his way back to England, and to Silver Square. What do you think, Betsy?"

"I should say most likely he will, sir," said the confidante; "especially if he thinks there's anything more to be got out of his poor father. And think that he will, so long as both of them live."

"Just my opinion," said Mr. Falconer; "and so I have taken measures to meet that difficulty. I have placed that forged paper in the hands of a sharp London lawyer, and given him instructions to set the police to work, and have William Bix arrested the moment he causes any fresh trouble. The lawyer's name is Fawley: he lives in Hatton Garden. Stay, here is his address. You will take care of it?"

"I'll take care of it, sir," said Betsy.

"And all you will have to do, in the event we have supposed, will be to give Fawley a hint that the young man is in London, or send for him if you are in any trouble of any sort through William. He will do all the rest."

"I'll mind your direction, sir; but would it not be better for Mr. Bix himself?"

"No, he is too tender-hearted. I look to you to protect him."

And Betsy promised again that she would take care of her old master; and on this understanding the conference ended.

As I have said, it was many years afterwards that this matter came to my knowledge, and I am unable to fill up the blank which it will be seen has been left in William Bix's history. It is easy to be conjectured, however, that, having lived the life of a rowdy in America till the remnant of his plunder was dissipated, and then having preyed upon society till it was no longer safe for him to remain in that country, and fancying, too, that his trouble in England was blown over, he worked his way home to levy fresh contributions from his father, when he met the unexpected check I have already described.

I have only to add here that he did not make his appearance again at Silver Square. The apparition of his injured benefactor, and Betsy's threat of Newgate, probably frightened him. Happily, too, for my poor grandfather's peace and comfort, the fact that my uncle William had returned to England was successfully kept from his knowledge.

I shall have more to tell of William Bix in some future chapter. At present, however, I dismiss him from the scene.

STOCK-EXCHANGE NOTES.

VI.—WINDING-UP A COMPANY.

"THERE are companies, and there are companies." It is of "Bubble Companies" that we are now speaking, though "winding-up" is also sometimes advisable for good companies. When a company "goes to the bad," as the phrase runs—when, having been promoted solely for the sake of the promotion-money, puffed into notice by a lying prospectus, bolstered by irresponsible directors, floated into the market upon false pretences, and rigged into temporary éclat by the bellowing of the Bulls—it finally collapses, does no business but sham business, pays no dividends, and only goes on incurring debts and responsibilities; the *bond fide* shareholders are soon made aware of the unwelcome facts, and are apt to grow indignant accordingly. In their haste to prevent further loss, and to save, if it be possible, something out of the impending wreck, some one or other of them, with the concurrence and complicity of the rest, or, perhaps, without either, will present a petition to the Vice-Chancellor, setting forth the state of affairs, and praying him for an order authorizing the winding-up of the undertaking. Of course, assuming that a company has really "gone to the bad," and has no prospect of recovering itself, the sooner it is wound up the better for all honest people connected with it; but it happens now and then that shareholders will take a panic fright, and, like terrified seamen in a storm, will rush into the Chancery Court as though it were a life-boat, and leave their venture to its fate, when, by courage and perseverance, they might have saved both ship and cargo.

The petition not being opposed, the prayer of it is granted, the winding-up decreed, and, ere long, a functionary skilled in finance, and probably an accountant by profession, is appointed, under the designation of "official liquidator," to see the business through. This appointment, in ordinary cases, is worth a thousand pounds or two to the fortunate individual who obtains it, while it is worth quite as much to the solicitor, or the legal firm whom he in his turn shall select to do the legal business. It is no wonder, therefore, that there is a good deal of scheming and ingenuity exercised by competitors for the office, and that occasional payments, or promises to pay, contingent on circumstances, circulate among them. The lawyers may have the most influence in guiding the decision, but it is not a lawyer, it is an actuary or accountant, who is wanted to take the lead; yet, somehow the official liquidator is not unfrequently the agent of some legal firm in the city, whose influence procures him the post, when he, in return, appoints them his coadjutors.

The object of these confederated adjusters of affairs, who, it is likely, may have some three or four hundred shareholders to experiment upon, is in reality just to obtain for themselves as much of the flesh as they can succeed in stripping from the defunct company's carcass—at least, such too often is their object, if we are to believe the testimony of the unfortunates who from time to time pass under their hands. Their avowed and ostensible business is, of course, to collect all debts due to the concern, and to pay off, as far as the assets will go, all demands upon it. The debtors to the company, now that it is no longer a company, are all those persons

holding shares liable to calls; while the creditors are those who hold shares fully paid up, and other persons who have valid accounts against it for goods delivered or services rendered.

The business of collecting begins by the issue from the solicitors of letters to all and sundry who are liable, calling on them to pay up a specified amount on the shares they hold, within a specified time, and usually intimating that, in case of neglect or refusal so to do, the demands made on them will be enforced by legal proceedings. It is one thing to issue peremptory summonses of this kind, and another thing to get them obeyed. For a day or two after the first issue of such documents there is a pause of expectation, during which the senders, especially if they are old hands at the business, will not expect too much. It is generally the case that nobody is in a violent hurry to reply. About the third or fourth day, however, the postman comes in rather heavily laden, and disburdens himself of a cargo of letters marked "On Her Majesty's Service," and which, at a glance, are recognised as returns from the Dead-Letter Office. On being examined, they show all too plainly that, of the three or four hundred shareholders applied to, a surprisingly large number are not to be found at their old places of abode, or have refused their letters, which have thus come back to the writers of them. The replies from the unfortunate shareholders who are too honest to run away come in much more slowly, and very small indeed is the number of those who respond to the call by cheques on their bankers, or even by promises to pay. Some are in a jocular mood—a mood sourly jocular—and indulge bitter jokes and sarcasms against the company and all connected with it, and declare frankly that they won't pay, not intending to be robbed more than they have been robbed already. Some are outrageously angry and indignant, and declare boldly that they will spend every penny they possess in resisting the demand, rather than pay a single shilling. Some—and these are among the most provoking that have to be dealt with—profess themselves quite willing to pay all that is asked of them whenever it shall be in their power, submitting that at the present time they happen to be in difficulties, and would be happy and grateful in accepting a friendly loan from their correspondent. Others reply defiantly, daring the lawyers to do their worst; and others—and these last are all too numerous, because they are generally men who hold a round number of shares—do not reply at all; instead of that they take measures to free themselves from their responsibility, in any way and every way in which they can possibly bring it about. They will make over their property to friendly hands, and then betake themselves to some foreign country; they will whitewash themselves in the bankruptcy court; they will slink away into hiding, and leave no trace by which they can be discovered. In the course of time, by continued correspondence, and by means of country agents who make searches and inquiries, and partly by the assistance of honest shareholders who feel themselves justified in bringing would-be defaulters to book, some approach to a knowledge of the actual state of affairs, as to who can be made to pay, and who not, is obtained, so that an idea can be formed as to what dividend, if any dividend is obtainable at all, can be set apart for the creditors. The Court of Chancery decides what shall be the amount to be paid up on each share by the shareholders, that amount being doubtless proportioned to the sum total of the creditors' claims. The collection of these sums, from the several holders of shares not paid up, drags in month after month, and swells the

expense of proceedings proportionately. Stung with the sense of injury, many people dispute them in courts of law; and finding, or fancying that they find, some irregularity in their own case, which ought to free them from liability, they spend ten or twenty times the sum claimed in resisting payment, only to pay after all, or not to pay because they have nothing to pay with, having spent their all in law proceedings.

Thus the winding-up drags its slow length along, until all but the fortunate winders (who are spinning for themselves a golden web all the while) get sick, weary, and disgusted with the interminable business, and detest the very mention of it. By-and-by it may be that the creditors get a small dividend, as in the case of the R—S— company, which but the other day rejoiced their creditors by the bestowal of twopence-halfpenny in the pound—or it may be that they didn't get anything. If the official liquidator succeeds in liquidating his own costs, to the tune of a couple of thousand pounds, and those of his legal colleagues to a tune equally harmonious, their joint ends are answered, their part of the business is crowned with success. These mutual friends have duly profited by the discharge of their honourable functions, and are fat and sleek through feasting on the plump oysters, while the creditors console themselves as they can with the empty shells, and the valuable moral lesson they have all of them received.

Having wound up our company in the approved and established manner, we shall prepare to wind up our Notes, with one or two observations which are confirmed by the present crisis, looking to the abnormal multiplicity of schemes of all descriptions which are continually coming before the public, the vast majority of which schemes are concocted solely to administer to the greed of their promoters and abettors. From the "Times" of the 30th of December last we learn that no fewer than two hundred and eighty-seven new joint-stock companies, with authorized capitals to the amount of £106,955,000, were brought out in 1865. Of the new projects during that year 119 were of a trading and manufacturing character, 49 were mining companies, 33 were building and investment companies, 15 were shipping companies, 13 were railway companies, and 11 were banks. This list is irrespective of companies existing before the year 1865, and of which, in that year, the new issues were over seven millions sterling; and irrespective also of the foreign loans, of which over twenty millions were called up, the greater part of which had to be raised in this country. A large proportion of these new projects, we are told, proved abortive, or expired after a sickly existence; but we are not told what was the amount of loss inflicted on the community by these abortive speculations, and which would represent the total of the plunder bagged by the "promoters" and others with whom the schemes originated.

Of the projects of last year, it is said that 119 were "of a trading and manufacturing character;" that is, they were merely private existing establishments in the hands of men who, not being able to carry them out satisfactorily themselves, found it advantageous to foist them on the public, and succeeded, by the trickery of promoters and their allies, in realizing a round sum for them. In such cases the former proprietor retires from the concern himself, though usually retaining a nominal post in it, and leaves it to be managed on the limited liability principle, by such persons as the directors of the company, with a natural partiality for their own *protégés*, and the nominees of their colleagues, may choose to appoint. No conjurer is wanted to tell us that the mass of the abortive and sickly projects which so speedily

expired was of this class. What prospect of success can there be in the prosecution of a business where there is no head or chief vitally interested in the management—where all the departments are under the control of agents paid by fixed salaries, and appointed through interest and not through merit—where the eye of the master is never on the workmen—and where, from the very constitution of the establishment, it is every man's concern to look to his own advantage, and the concern of no man to watch over that of the shareholders? The public, in their own behalf, are bound to look suspiciously on all new ventures of this kind. As investments, they are more than ordinarily hazardous, and there can be little doubt but that the mass of them will sooner or later collapse in bankruptcy and winding-up.

To sum up briefly: let him who has a little money to invest, and who has no wish to gamble with it, recall the dictum of Baron Rothschild, with which we set out—namely, "that it is much easier to get money than to take care of it when you have got it;" and let him exercise due caution accordingly. We have shown him some of the snares which lie in wait for him, and, we trust, have made him sufficiently familiar with the aspect of the money-trappers, to enable him to keep clear of their traps. For the rest, let him accept the maxim of the Duke of Wellington, that high interest signifies bad security, and act upon it. We may add, however, that at the present time the tendencies of the money-market point towards a rise in the value of money, and that such tendencies seem likely to endure.

RAGAMUFFINS.

BY JOHN MACCORMICK, ESQ.

If you keep your head up, and look straight on as you push through our crowded streets, you will see what is an upper stratum of humanity verging on six feet high; and you may move in this for years without finding that, about two feet under the level of the man-life, there is a full current of boy-life also flowing in the crowd, quite independent of the other, and with its own looks and voices, and its own business and pleasures.

Now and then a shrill shout issues from a young throat on one side of the thronged Strand. Men do not hear it—at any rate, they heed it not—and certainly they do not understand it; but the call is from some invisible urchin to his unseen friend on the other side of the street, who hears it at once, and knows what it means too, just as the men do on the wharves by the Thames when strange shouts to "Bill" or "Tom" sound out of a thick river fog, and there follows a long, loud, unintelligible sentence from a waterman, addressing his particular friend on shore as he floats with the tide, on his great black barge, in a silent misty morning.

Look a little down, then, and see this unnoticed boy-life. Nay, you *must* look down at it when a shoebblack points suggestively to your spattered boots, or a half-penny box of matches is shoved into your hand, or when the ragged representative of "young England" flashes upon you upside down, flinging a somersault on the *pavé*, all legs and arms, whirling about like the spokes of a wheel.

"Piowitz! Piowitz!" It is the cry of the Belgian boys as they run alongside the four-horse coach which takes you from Brussels to Waterloo; and they will turn you a "pirotte" if you first throw them a sou. But the London ragamuffin will "turn a wheel" first, and then trust to your honour on the omnibus for

payment. It is a cruel thing for men to throw pence to encourage this trick in the streets; for the poor little fellows are rushing one way and looking another, and so they get dreadful falls. The roughest of them snatch the halfpence, after a fight. They are unsettled for honest work, and are tutored in begging and impudence, and tempted away to run far from home and school.

All you good people who have pennies to spare, do not throw them for a scramble, do not cast them from a bridge into the mud, that you may enjoy the struggles of children groping in the slush and squabbling for the coins: far better throw your pennies into the deep river at once. But why throw the pennies at all? Rightly given, they will pay for that mudlark's clothes, or be wages for his honest work, or will fasten a plank in that "School-ship" where the young gymnast may be happy and safe, and the human "wheel" may be turned into a British tar.

Not long ago a street-boy set up as a banker; yes, a *bond side* banker, with a subscribed capital, a place of business, and regular customers. He posted himself near Temple Bar, on the pavement, while his capital was elevenpence-halfpenny. The customers he looked for were the conductors of omnibuses who were in want of change for a shilling; and when they knew they could get this from the boy who ran after them on being signalled, they readily gave a shilling for the elevenpence-halfpenny which was to be had at once, all counted out, and *without stopping the bus*. This boy said he made a good living out of these transactions.

One of the most singular phases of boy-life in the streets was mentioned by Mr. Gladstone, in his speech on the Reform Bill, as having been seen by him; and, as we happened also to notice the instance (a unique case let us hope), it may here be described. On a calm evening last winter three boys were seen to stop in a small street off the Quadrant. One was dressed like the parish clerk of a church, with a black gown; the second represented a clergyman clad in a surplice—probably an old night-shirt—and with a broad pink ribbon over his shoulders; while the third boy stood in front, bareheaded, as a congregation. Several youngsters soon collected about this motley group; and then the parson took a book and began to read the service aloud, while the clerk made his responses, and tried to sell printed papers of the words. This travesty of the Prayer Book was a gross and fearful blasphemy, and it began, "Dearly beloved brethren, starvation moveth us in sundry places to acknowledge and confess our manifold wants and weakness," etc., etc. The parody went on to the prayers and the Gloria, while the juvenile crowd standing round looked puzzled and grave; for ribaldry sounds ill from childish lips. When we had brought a policeman to stop this shocking scene, he said it was a *ruse* to collect a knot of gazers, for these would usually be found to be just the kind of simple folk whose pockets can be picked.

To return, however, to more ordinary characters, there are the crossing-sweepers, a powerful, numerous, ubiquitous community, with most complicated rights and privileges, and jealously-guarded vested interests, as every one soon finds out who tries to meddle with them, either to suppress or improve them. It may be easily calculated that six-sevenths of the time of a boy crossing-sweeper is spent in running back and forward begging for money on his ground; and, as he may make twenty such journeys for a penny, it is plain that, if the boy could be paid without "dunning" for it, he ought to be able to keep seven or eight crossings perfectly clean. A plan

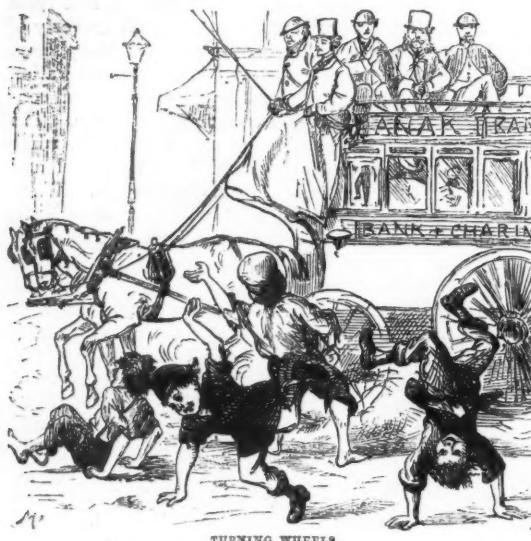
of this sort was tried in Brighton, and also in London, with success; but it has become the duty of the Metropolitan Board to manage this matter, and perhaps, after they have arranged the sewage and embanked the Thames, they will turn their attention to the pavements, and abate the constant persecutions to which we pedestrians are exposed, being pestered at every crossing, and spattered from wheels in every narrow way, and importuned by beggars if we stop, or run over by omnibuses if we go on.

We are inclined to think that maimed or infirm paupers might be appointed as crossing-sweepers, including old women, if not too feeble to avoid being run over. Large sums of money are earned at present by such persons; and the following instance, stated to us on most reliable authority, is by no means unprecedented. An old gentleman, who had occasionally given a trifle to a crossing-sweeper at various times during eighteen years, was one day stopped by the man with a respectful salute, and "Beg your pardon, sir: will you allow me to say a word to you?" "Certainly," answered the gentleman. "Well, sir, I shall be obliged if you will do me the honour to come and dine with me to-day at 6 o'clock." The gentleman, as may well be supposed, was amazed, and, while he paused, the other said, "Don't be afraid, sir: I'll give you a good dinner." Finally he accepted, and went to the man's house, where his host was as good as his word, and, moreover, had other guests to meet his patron, and a servant to wait upon them. Next morning the crossing-sweeper was at his post with the broom as before.

As for beggars, of course many of them reap rich harvests by whining, or threatening, or staring in



"BUY A BOX OF MATCHES, SIR?"



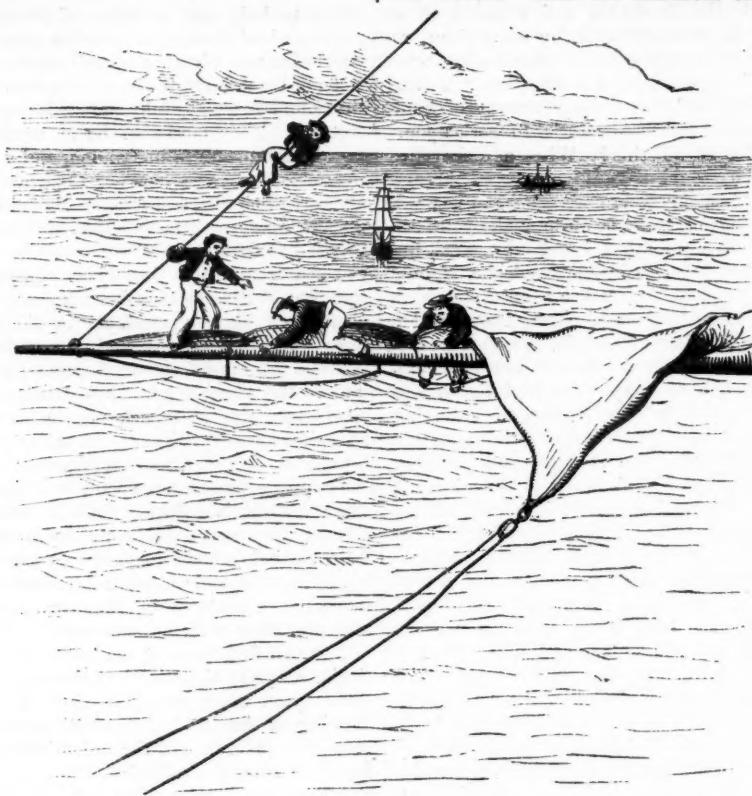
TURNING WHEELS.

silence at the flags. An experienced beggar of the purely "lounger" class once said, "I can very well do sixty streets in a day, and it must be a *very* bad street indeed that does not give me a penny."

Street-begging has lately assumed a commercial aspect, from the fact that all members of the "profession" now pretend to sell something; and the readiest article for the purpose is a box of cigar-lights, which can be sold for a half-penny, leaving a margin of profit (how minute!) on the wood, the chemicals, the box, the paper round it, and the printing upon that. But there is a real trade in "lighters" at the omnibus-stands; and our wood-cut represents the manner in which the boys who sell these boxes convey their wares on long sticks to the customers smoking on the top of an omnibus.

Aquin, there is the artist who draws volcanoes and fresh mullet with brilliant colours on the flags, writing below his tableaux, "I am starving." He has indignantly refused a good offer of regular work at a scene-painter's—for a week's wages are not so much as a day's dole of the benevolent (yes, there are "casual" philanthropists, too), and a workshop is not so cheerful as

the busy street. But we must pass him by, and look at it, and to educate and improve the youthful merchants and traders. Thus the hundreds of newspaper-boys,



ON THE YARD-ARM.

Whenever street-selling is real trade, and not a mere "blind" for mendicancy, it becomes feasible to regulate

who buzz about like flies, might be made to collect their honey like bees if they were properly hived. One or two abortive attempts to do this in London have been made; but the thing is quite practicable, and it has been successfully carried out in America, where the business of newspaper-boys has been longer in operation than in England. A few years ago we had great satisfaction in visiting the "news-boys' home" in Philadelphia, where much good has been effected by an enterprising and benevolent Canadian gentleman, who is now in England.

The subject of boy-life in London is a large and interesting field for the ingenuity and energy of Christian philanthropy to work upon. It is more "workable," so to speak, than the harder soil of adult pauperism. In dealing with boys you have, after all, some pliant and supple natures, however crooked they may be in the twist given to the young twigs. There is a vein of humour, too, and of quaint oddness, which enlists the sympathy of a tender heart, while it provokes a smile—nay, a smile is needful, or you will fail here. There was a boy, for instance, in the red Shoeblack Society, who, when visited by the inspector at his station, was constantly found to be standing upon his head, instead of cleaning people's boots. On inquiring why he amused himself in this strange fashion, he said he had been a "street acrobat," and was so often standing on his head (he gravely added), "it is necessary to do this now for my constitution." He soon got to work pretty well when he was proper-end-uppermost, but still at odd hours he was sure to be found at his old relaxa-



BOY OF THE UNION SHOE-BLACK BRIGADE.

tion, and in a spare five minutes he would quietly adjourn to a wall where he could rest topsy-turvy in peace. But, while the freshness and stamina of an English boy may be unconquerable by want alone, rebounding into active energy speedily when he has work and food, there is often in the adult pauper a tired deadness of feeling, and sad disheartenment of hope, which make him a far different material to work upon.

Can you wonder at all this? What a dishevelled mind and body you would have if you passed through weary years, like his, in filth, and crime, and want. Two nights on a journey without sleep make you half-stupid next day. The feeling of being unwashed, unshaved, and the hot eyes, and dull headache, is only bearable because you look forward to a good splash in the bath, and a change of linen, a cheery room, and a nice breakfast, the greetings of friends, the pleasures of business, and a charming sound sleep at last in a comfortable bed. The hapless pauper has had nights and nights of frowsy unrest in close rooms, or shivering open air, and days and days of nipping hunger, and months and months of deferred hope, and perhaps, worst of all, the conviction that much of his misery is his own making; but he has no food, no friends, no home, no "prospects;" and yet some of us expect the man to understand every word of an address in four-syllable English, to weigh our arguments, and accept our maxims, and to rise up, all famished and heart-broken, as fresh as the best of us, and then we are amazed or angry that he is so lazy and dull. Such a man is to be taken by the hand and by the heart. The love of Jesus for a wretched sinner is the best truth for him, and it is enough at first; but his poor body must be cared for too; for Christ did thus with men.

But, though we must try to do our best for the ignorant and destitute outcasts, and the criminals also, of this generation, that is to say, the adults, we can, at any rate, certainly benefit the next generation if we lay hold of the boys.

Schools are necessary for all boys—ragged schools for many of them, refuges for the homeless, reformatories for the tainted, and prisons for the thoroughly bad. Many boys may be enabled to "live and learn" if they are set to work at once, even in the very streets where they were a nuisance to the public, and a misery to themselves.

The boys' refuges of London are not well known to the general public, who ignore or forget things they do not constantly see in their daily life. The support of these refuges depends, therefore, especially on more thoughtful philanthropists; and we may presume that the reader claims to be among this more reflective class who think that good things are worth searching for, and who would like to visit the street-boy when he is supplied with a home, and friends, and food, and work. Go to Field Lane Refuge, near Farringdon Street, to see, on a Sunday evening, the waifs of the boy-life current rested, taught, and befriended; look in at the refuge in Great Queen Street on a week-day, to see the lads who are further civilized by industrial work, and regular meals, and home discipline; enter the Boys' Refuge in Commercial Street, Whitechapel, where you will find a hundred younger boys trained to trades, drilled to march, and happy in the music of a band of their own; and if the summer flowers bloom on the green hedges, and you would like to see Christian work a little farther off, then visit the reformatory at Wandsworth, with its fragrant gardens, or the "Home for Little Boys" at Tottenham; with its hundred tiny atoms of humanity saved from the great seething waves of a teeming city.

When these have been inspected, and the heart and head of the visitor are set at work to do at least something to help one or other of these efforts—even by *talking about them*, if in no other way—he will have discovered a new pleasure as well as an old duty; but, if none of these institutions exactly suit his fancy—for at first one has wonderfully particular notions of what perfect machinery ought to be at work—then there are twenty more refuges in London, and a hundred and fifty ragged-schools, every one of them worth seeing, nearly all worth helping, and most of them in their very sight a speaking sermon to tell what sin has done, and what Christ has done.

Even if all these have been unseen, an enterprise like that of the shoeblock societies cannot possibly be overlooked by any residents in the metropolis. The boys are in bright array, and occupy the most prominent posts in the most frequented streets; so every Londoner knows the shoeblocks. It is beginning to be a long time since this shoeblock movement commenced, now fifteen years ago. There are seven societies of these boys, and, though their coats are of different colours, their principles, management, and system are all the same. There is a Roman Catholic society besides. All the ragged school shoeblock societies take boys selected from ragged schools in their several districts, and the boys are educated on week-days and Sundays in their respective schools, while they earn their livelihood by means of their work in connection with the society.

You will find them at the head-quarters of their particular corps at eight in the morning; and you can hear their hymn sung, and join their little prayer for a blessing on the day. Out rush the red-coats and blue-coats, the yellows, and the union-jacks (in sailors' garb) for their several stations, and for a good day's work. But stay: one boy seems to lag behind; he is lame and has a crutch. He will hobble slowly to his post, but he will quickly gather pennies there. That boy, when the subscription was suggested for the relief of the distress in Lancashire, put down fifteen shillings as his quota, saying, "I knew myself what it was to be in want." It is a good thing to find work that suits the lame boys. Or say that you come, about six o'clock, to one of their offices near Temple Bar, and see the lads return, put by their boxes, wash their blackened cheeks, showing roses where there was grime, pay in their earnings, lodge their savings in their bank, sit down to tea, *pay for it*, and then give full play to the boy politics and the *gamin* gossip which they have gleaned in a day's bright look-out among the *busiest* people of the greatest city in the world, or linger over coffee and the draught-board, or push the dominoes about with their black paws of hands. 'Tis eight o'clock, and they are all off to school. How we should yawn if we had to begin "pot-hooks" or "long-division" after such a day's exertion!

The blue boys in East London will go to bed in their own refuge, and so will thirty of the hundred red boys in Mr. Hanbury's *society* far off in Paddington; and another set in the Limehouse brigade, and another at Islington. Others, again, will sleep at parents' houses, lodgings, or school refuges. Almost all of them would be better never to go "home." But, as they are leaving, you see one boy, with his cap, gravely stands collecting halfpence: it is a subscription for a sick comrade, and is, of course, "voluntary;" only you must give. They have an etiquette and little rules of their own: do not meddle with them.

Then comes the holiday, and the boys flock to see the bears climb for buns in Regent's Park, and the

monkeys grin at the merry crowd, not exactly of their species, but all in red monkey-jackets ; or it is the winter treat, and the boys eat cake, and get good advice after it, and their parents, too, are there to tea, and worn-looking aunts and sisters have now glad eyes as they look at the medal on that boy's breast.

The earnings in a year of the three hundred and fifty boys are about £7,000. "But how do you know that they bring in all they receive?" Yes, that is an important question. We will only say that a halfpenny withheld dishonestly dismisses the boy, and that there are ways of finding this out, but they had better be inquired about privately when you visit one of the shoe-blacks' houses. In this kind of employment there is great temptation to embezzle money, and there is great inducement to be honest. Certainly it is a test of a boy's principles first to earn five shillings in pennies, and then to bring them all back in the evening, or to account for some by cakes and fruit ; for this is allowed. Some boys are strengthened by such a trial, and they will be good servants and shop-boys after being so trained to handle money without letting it stick to their fingers. Others succumb. A little fellow lately, who swept a crossing, was so honest there that he ran a long way after a gentleman to return him a half-sovereign given in mistake between two halfpence. He was twice promoted to be a shoeblack, and twice in a few days he had to be dismissed. This only showed that you must always be careful, generally be hopeful, and seldom be sure of the boys.

Wimbledon, in summer, resounds with the riflemen's shooting, and a thousand volunteers are in camp. You will find two tents there full of shoeblacks. These boys are sent to other rifle-meetings also, far off in the country. And what a vacation tour this must be to London lads, who have so little notion of rural life that one of them calls out to the others, "Oh, come here, Jim ; come and see the pigs in their dens!"

Shoeblacks start sometimes on their own account. Some have a box given them by persons who advertise upon its sides ; others have had to leave a shoeblack society, and they set up independently as "freebooters," who have indeed freedom, but lose status ; though it is consolatory to know that, even when a lad has been dismissed from a society, he is generally found to have been benefited by its influence ; and nearly always he retains some good teaching, as well as an affectionate remembrance of kindness, and the acknowledgment that he was well treated and justly discharged.

As for the good boys, they get into every kind of situations, and are disposed of as soldiers and sailors all over the world by thousands, whence many write with thankful hearts and very hard steel pens, "hoping this will find you well, as it leaves me at this present." Married shoeblacks—formerly boys in the societies—now bring their progeny to see the present race of red-coats at their annual treat ; and what shall we say of the emigrants? Sturdy boys from Redhill Reformatory are tugging away at timber in Canada, and pocketing dollars in the States ; while the New Zealand volunteers that capture a "pah" can muster brave men who once begged in the Strand. To be greeted in a far-off colony by a rosy-cheeked youth, who was all rags and tatters, with hair like a mat, when you were first introduced, is one of the most delightful pleasures we have had—the sweet fruit ripened from a dingy seed.

Other plans for employing boys have been tried, but not with like success. A few years ago twenty boys were set to work to sweep the pavement in Regent Street and Bond Street, each having twenty shops each at a penny each

per day. Six boys were started as "message-boys," well clothed, and able to guarantee the safety of parcels up to ten pounds ; but it was found that bad boys did not suit for this, and good boys could earn more money with the blacking-brush. This sort of service is now well performed by the corps of commissionaires.

A few years ago, with great hope, and perhaps too lofty expectations, the "Rag Brigade" sent forth its red-painted carts, dragged and shoved by uniformed urchins, who bought the *débris* of office paper, kitchen-stuff, and other odds and ends often gladly given to them gratis. Then at the refuge, with much slow toil, this hotchpotch was picked and sorted into its elements and sold at a profit. This effort gradually languished, but it bids fair to live heartily again, as the Limehouse committee have revived the scheme ; and they will look for your patronage and your cook's, hoping that your extensive correspondence may result in thousands of envelopes useless to you, and yet valuable to them.

Setting aside the children of paupers, it is estimated, on very good authority, that there are 60,000 destitute juveniles in London. Even if there be only half that number, it is truly a great crowd of little people we have to deal with ; and, though all the agencies already enumerated are in full operation, we find thousands of children are still waiting for our help. The criminals among them are secured by the police as each young plant ripens ; but, out of 3000 juveniles charged last year in London, only 200 were sent to reformatories. We have thousands still left, you see, on the curb-stones. Some of these are only schoolless, others are homeless, others foodless, and it will not do to confound these classes in providing for each. If a boy is in actual need of a slice of bread, it will not do to give him a spelling-book, or what would be (in his language) "lots of jaw, and little to eat." Well, there is the workhouse for many of them, and the Union Industrial Schools, with whole armies of little folk born to penury, but pretty well cared for in these child's barracks. However, there are thousands who cannot get in there, or who will not go in ; and do you blame them? In a fine summer day, when the street-boy can caper for halfpence, and buy his pudding smoking hot, and wander from park to river, gaze at shops, run to that crowd to see a horse fallen down, perch on that lamp-post to watch a procession, lounge for a chat with his "pals," bathe in the Serpentine, or toss for coppers, and then have a fight, and wind up by an hour with stage brigands and music, while he cracks nuts in the pit of the "penny gaff"—why should he knock demurely at the door of an institution, and seek to hurry from the sunshine and bustle of life, and his positive liberty, into a quiet, darkish building, with discipline, and hours, and a master, and a narrow cold bath ? It needs the resolution which would make a Bond Street lounger enter a monastery. The boy's prudence is not provident enough to make him think where he is to sleep to-night until it is to-night, and how, then, can we expect him to think of to-morrow, and of next year, and of his far-on life? No, he must be often tired, wet, cold, hungry, unwell, and weary of his days, before he will think of entering a refuge, and while he hesitates a hundred chances for petty crime occur. To be saved he must be sought.

Boys wandering thus were lately invited to a tea-party in the Great Queen Street Refuge, when one hundred and fifty "accepted the invitation;" and, after the Earl of Shaftesbury had explained how it was wished to help them out of want and ignorance, fifty entered the Refuge next day, where you may see them now busy and decent little fellows.

The least we can do for such boys is to house, feed, and teach; but the most we can provide will, alas! be only half a substitute for a proper home and good parents. The refuge matron is kind and thoughtful, but she cannot be a "mother dear;" the refuge boys are comrades, but they cannot be for brothers to the strange child; and where is there for him a gentle sister, that jewelled link of the family chain?

Two schemes were then devised for their advantage, a "Country Home" and a "School Ship," and at once large sympathy and large contributions came forth to aid these. Both the Home and the Ship will, however, be out of sight, and the general public are apt to forget invisible objects; but, as both the projects will be connected with the permanent and tangible institution in Great Queen Street, it is to be hoped that constant support may be obtained for these new efforts.

The proposal for a ship is made after several successful experiments. At Liverpool there is the frigate "Akbar," with 100 boys (sent by magistrates); and the "Clarence," and the "Indefatigable," fitted up by £5000 from Mr. B—; while there is a ship refuge, the "Havannah," at Cardiff; and the school-ship "Cornwall," on the Thames near Purfleet, where 200 boys are excellently taught and trained, the future Jacks for our swift clippers and our giant iron-clads, and some of them, perhaps, the admirals of days to come.

Sailor-life is just the thing for daring boys. The young sons of Britain take naturally to salt water, and they very soon learn their business; for London boys are far more clever and sharp than the Paris *gamins*—so we are told by one who knew the Quartier Latin for fourteen years, and the courts round Seven Dials equally well; so, when these precocious youngsters are captured before they are really spoilt, they make fine bold sailors, and, being sent far away from their old haunts and coteries, they have a new start in a fair field; for boys are now far better treated on board ship than they were some years ago.

Now it must be confessed that philanthropists are more ready to start a scheme of their own, with all its difficulties staring at them, than to take the part of citizens in established public institutions of benevolence. It is natural you should prefer to build a house or a ship where your committee can do as you like, rather than to spend days in visiting the workhouse wards under rules, or waste hours in battling with guardians, or in listening to the Babel of a vestry.

While admitting this, and that Christian men ought to be more gallant and less exclusive in their philanthropic action, it is quite undeniable that, even after the State, and the country, and the parish have done their full share, there will be boys enough on the street who ought not to be left wandering about as little beggars, until they end as big thieves. They must be laid hold of: who is to do it? Under the present law anybody may charge a young vagrant; so it is everybody's business, and that is why it is not done.

Private individuals have, now and then, ventured (sometimes unwisely) to "take this matter up;" but, as the police have already quite enough to do in the busiest quarters (and it is there these boys are, too), and are, moreover, not "required," but only empowered to charge vagrant boys,* and as private persons may get themselves into trouble, or may misapply the law inadvertently in their zeal, it seems to us manifest that some special police, or at least one experienced constable, ought

to be appointed for this purpose by a central authority having public confidence, such as the Reformatory and Refuge Union, which includes representatives from the managers of about two hundred institutions. Let us suppose that this benevolent beadle begins his rounds. He puts this boy into a reformatory, that one into an industrial school, the third he gets into a refuge, and the next into a ragged-school. But still there are half a dozen more who are weakly children, and may be housed in the "Country Home;" while a score besides, whose noise and gambols tell they have heart, and muscle, and pluck, will all be marched off to the new School-ship. The news that such a special functionary had appeared in the streets would permeate London in three days. The really bad fellows would be deterred, and the really destitute would remain to be helped. The vile employers of street-begging children would fear to lose their poor little profitable slaves; and the honest parents who wish their boys to be saved would see their way to yield them up, and even to pay their share when possible.

It may thus be presumed, from the operation of all similar causes, that the actual result in *deterring* would be immediate and general, even if very few cases had to be dealt with as an experiment.*

But the School-ship has to be built? No; she has been given by the Government: a fine new frigate, too.

She has still to be launched, however, as a refuge for London homeless boys; and we must not forget that the iron-clad "Northumberland" stuck in her launching because the ways had not sufficient inclination, and yet they got her off when the tide had risen high. Now to launch the School-ship there must be strong *inclination* also, and the tide of benevolence must swell its golden stream. It is, doubtless, an expensive project, but it is not *dear*. Much money is required, but more good will be done.

Let us, then, float the School-ship, and fill up her bread-lockers, and hoist the blue Peter at the fore, that she is outward bound from penury and vice. Muster the young crew on deck, and loose the sails to a favouring breeze. Their voyage is begun. God speed the ship!

ZOOLOGICAL NOTES.

BY J. K. LORD, F.Z.S.

A RAMBLE THROUGH THE LONDON FUR STORES.

A FEW months ago, in the pages of "The Leisure Hour," we indulged in an imaginary wander through the hunting-ground of the far North-west, played the spy upon the Indian hunter, white trapper, and fur trader, and saw for ourselves by what snares our furry friends were trapped, and what became of their much-coveted jackets when stripped by the hunter from off the unfortunate captives. Now I ask you, courteous reader, to put aside ideal prairies, primeval forests, rushing torrents, and glassy lakes, together with the poetry and romance that usually enwrap the life of the "solitary hunter"—a romance, by the way, according to my experience, existing only in the fancy of those who, ensconced in snug arm-chairs by cosy fires, read Cooper's novels, and believe in their truthful portrayal of the "noble savage" at home in the wilderness. Let us together elbow our way through the crowded thoroughfares that skirt the much-befooled old Thames, to reach the new and capacious fur warehouse of the Hudson's Bay Company, situate in Lime Street. We are ascending a few steps to reach floor No. 1 of the fur store. We stop to read some large letters which

* Probably this defect may be remedied in the amended Acts which it is understood the Government will seek to pass this session.

* Since this was in type, the suggestion has been adopted experimentally.

head a mass of paper, reminding one of a gigantic brief—"Sale by Auction." The Hudson's Bay Company will expose to sale, at their house, in Fenchurch Street, the following goods." These sales, let me inform you, are held three times a year; the first in January, which comprises beaver and musquash from Canada, Labrador, and the Hudson's Bay settlements; the second in March. The furs for this sale we are now going to look at. The third is held in September, when the products from the north-west coast of America are disposed of. The furs collected by the American Fur Company are also sold by auction immediately after those of the Hudson's Bay Company; and following this sale comes Messrs. Culverwell, Brooks, and Co.'s sale for skins of all kinds. We turn short off to our right as we reach the top of the steps, and enter an immense room. A powerful compound kind of smell meets us at the door, strongly suggestive of Wombwell's menagerie in a concentrated form. The source of this wild beast scent is soon apparent. We see before us 1238 heaps of bear-skins. These heaps are marked lots 1, 2, 3, and so on, and contain various numbers and different qualities of bear-skins; in all, 5107 skins.

Here, at a large table, we can watch an experienced hand sorting them. Two assistants lay a skin before him on the table. Now he grabs the hair with both hands, as if he meant there and then to have it out by the roots. Three such clutches settle the matter as to whether, as a "military bear," its future is—I hardly think adorn or protect are right terms—at any rate, to cover a soldier's head, or as an "Isabella" to be used to deck the mantles, and in the muff form warm the fair hands of wealthy ladies; or, if a very inferior article, its destiny is to be trodden on as a mat or cut up into strips and appropriated to all sorts of ignoble uses.

The skins of the cinnamon or brown bear (*Ursus arctos*), comprising this heap, No. 2, were at one time immensely valuable, being in great demand for bordering mantles and ladies' garments; £40 was readily obtained for one good skin; so changeable, however, is "fickle fashion," that £5 is now about the worth of a really good skin. These black bear-skins are commercially the more valuable, the prices varying from £5 to £18 per skin. They are principally used for military caps, saddle housings, trimmings for harness, sleigh robes, rugs, and linings. This lot of gigantic grizzlies makes one feel cold all over, to think what terrible beasts they must have been, when in full possession of life, teeth, claws, and, possessing the strength of two dray horses, they shambled about in their native haunts. Though so large and shaggy, the jackets of these ursine monsters are of comparatively little value: the hair will not take dye well, and is found to be too coarse for general purposes; so the bulk of them find their way to Russia and other cold countries, where they are used for rugs, linings, and sledge robes. Some idea may be formed of the enormous money value bear-skins represent; for when we add a thousand skins as the number represented by the other sales to the 5107 surrounding us, and take £1 11s. as the average sum realized per skin at the sale, £5 being the highest, and 18s. the lowest amount at which each skin was sold, we have £9465 17s.

We leave the bear-chamber, ascend a winding stairway to the second storey, and enter a room very similar to the one below; here the same pungent perfume greets our nostrils, only more strongly tinctured with fox and weazel. Frames of wood divide this room into a number of narrow passages.

This queer-looking arrangement reminds one of so

many gibbets, a resemblance rendered the more striking by the bundles of different coloured fox-skins, that dangle at short distances from each other, along the entire length of the frame, hung by the necks, as if hundreds of foxes had together committed vulpicide (I believe that is the right term) to avoid imprisonment.

We look at this first row, in lots of 7 and 10, numbering in all 475 skins, ranging in colour from very nearly black to a light silvery gray. These are named "silver foxes," and fetch an enormously high price. The silver fox (*Canis argentatus*) surpasses all other species by the profusion and beauty of its fur, which is either black or rich brown, but, being besprinkled with longer hairs which are gray, the general colour is silvery to the eye. The best skins come from Labrador, but many lots of splendid silver foxes are marked G. W. R., which the uninitiated might mistake for "Great Western Railway;" but, properly interpreted, it means Great Whale River. The silver fox is found in the northern parts of Asia, Europe, and America; a single skin has been sold in London for £100. The highest price realized at the sale was £30, the lowest £1 12s.,* giving an average of £7 9s. 3d.; add 171, as the number sold at the other auctions, and we get for silver foxes a sum of £4820 15s. 6d. The greater number go to supply the Russian and China markets.

The imperial pelisse of the Emperor of Russia, made from the black necks of the silver fox, was valued at £3500. As much as £600 is frequently paid by Russian nobles for a cloak lining of silver fox-skins. On the next gibbet hang skins of the cross-fox, in lots varying from 16 to 40 skins, the total number for sale being 1610. These are not nearly so valuable as the silver fox. The black or very dark cross on the neck and shoulders gives it a value in the eyes of some foreign sects, where the cross is worn as a priestly decoration; but the fur is principally used for sledge robes, caps, and trimmings. The highest price made at the sale was £4, the lowest 14s., giving an average of £1 14s. 8d.; add 454 to 1610=2064, and we have a money value of £5577 12s.

Now we come to the red foxes, which far outnumber both the cross and silver. 1778 skins are disposed in 136 lots. Most of these handsome, yellow-looking skins will be purchased by brokers and resold at the Leipsic Easter and autumn fairs, to Russian fur-dealers. A great number will also find their way to Turkey, where the fur is held in great esteem for carriage rugs, and linings for the long over-coats worn by all swell Turks. These skins fetched at the sale an average price of 10s. 0½d. each; add to 7178 the number sold at the other sales, viz., 6568=13,746; and we have the sum of £6901 12s. 9d.

From the red we visit a long tier of white fox-skins; 5900 are suspended from this cross-bar, in 109 lots. These were inhabitants of high northern latitudes, and are deservedly celebrated for the beauty and fineness of their fur, which is in great measure exported to foreign markets. These ranged from 19s. 6d. to 4s., an average of 11s. 6d. each skin; add, for other sales, 1691 to 5900=7591, and the sum returned is £4364 16s. 6d.

There yet remain two more varieties; one consists of small, gray, woolly-looking fox-skins, known as "Kit Foxes;" 5138 of these are ready for market, worth 3s. 6d. per skin; to these add 1744=6882, returning £1204 7s. The other variety is known as the blue fox. There are but 34 skins, worth £1 12s. 6d. each; add 58 and we have 92, which gives £149 10s.

What have we here, with such soft, gray, delicate fur,

* The prices are those realized at the auction which I attended after my visit to the stores.

and no tails? Why, these are wild-cats, or lynxes, in other words, and a goodly number too—15,726 skins, divided into 285 lots. A great many are obtained from the United States, but nearly all we are looking at have been brought from British North America. The fur is not of much value, being too soft and silky to stand any wear. It is principally used for linings and sleigh rugs. The highest price obtained at the sale was 19s. 9d., the lowest 5s. 9d., giving an average 11s. 9d.; add 1484 to 15,726 and we have 17,210, which makes a return of £10,110 17s. 6d.

Piled from floor to ceiling, we notice long brown-looking affairs, like bags, made of skin. No fur is visible; and, to examine one, we must thrust the hand into the bag, and trust in great measure to touch, as a guide to the quality of the hidden fur. There are other skins that are always turned inside outwards by the trappers. Of these fish-hunters' jackets, 16,456 are visible, in 321 lots. The otter (*Lutra Canadensis*) is in great measure derived from North America, and mostly used by the Russians and Chinese. The fur is about the same fineness as that of the beaver, but much shorter, therefore not nearly so well adapted for making felt. Hence the price fluctuates in accordance with the tide of fashion. The maximum price realized at the sale was £1 17s. 5d., the minimum 8s., giving an average of 19s. 10½d.; add 896 to 16,456, and we get 17,352, which gives us £17,243 11s. returned for these fish-destroying animals. The skins are classed as brown, small, cut, seconds, and thirds.



THE OTTER.

We have yet to ascend another storey, where by far the most valuable assortment of furs awaits our inspection. Suspended from frames, such as we left in the room below, we see, on entering, 682 lots of small skins, all turned with the skin inside outermost: the only fur visible is a brushy, black-looking tail. You would hardly guess how much these tiny skins are worth, or that some of them—perhaps these we are slightly turning back, to blow into the fur, as a test of its silky staple and general thickness—may, nay, most probably will, be worn by persons of royal blood. The worst skin in any of these lots is worth 5s., and numbers of them sell for £3. A single skin has often been sold for ten guineas. North American sable, or marten (*Mustela Americana*)—for such are the skins we are looking at—are usually manufactured into linings, muffs, tippets, etc. Russian sable is often used for presents by the Emperor and other Russian magnates. The Sultan, together with other crowned potentates, has frequently paid more than a thousand guineas for a cloak-lining of sable. Ladies always treasure a set of sables; and the Lord Mayor, Aldermen, and Sheriffs of London have their civic robes furred with this weazel's jacket, in accordance with their rank.

The brushy black tail also has its use; made into artists' pencils, it may even be employed to place on canvas a portrait of the royal personage, robed in vestments trimmed with the skin the tail belonged to. At the sale, these martens, as they are called in the trade, averaged 19s. 9d. per skin, and there are 115,402 in this room; add for the other sales 3914=119,316, we get the vast sum of £117,824 11s.

On the next bar hang numerous lots, numbering 171, of brown skins somewhat like sable in colour, but of coarser hair: these are mink skins. Just now mink fur is extremely fashionable, a good mink muff being worth twenty-five guineas. It is an unfortunate thing for the mink that ladies have taken a fancy to wear its jacket; 34,906 mink-skins have been brought, principally from the north-west, to supply this demand; add to these 4062=38,968, from other localities, and that they realized at the sale 14s. 1½d. per skin on an average, and £27,521 9s. shows us a tidy sum for this coarse-haired little weazel. Here we may see skins of the skunk 2765. Fancy what a stench they could make if all alive! O; but furriers manage to get rid of the smell, in a great degree, and, by cutting out the white stripes, and rejoicing the black fur, make handsome muffs. They only fetch a small price, 3s. 2½d. per skin; still they represent a large sum: 17,953 skins produced £2861 5s. 2d. Fisher-skins are worth even more than martens, and are used for similar purposes. The long bushy tails, which you see tied up in bundles, were at one time of more value than the skin itself, being worn as an ornament for the hat or cap by Polish Jews. There are 4413 here, worth in money £6812 11s. 4d. We have not much more to see in this establishment, excepting two great heaps of seal-skins, the one composed of hair-seal, the other containing the much more valuable fur-seal.

Before the skin of the fur-seals can be used as fur, the upper or long hair must be removed. This is easily effected by shaving down the inner side of the skin until the roots of the longer hairs are reached. This a skilled hand does with a fleshing knife—a process requiring as much dexterity and care as a barber needs to shave a wrinkled face. The skins are then allowed to slightly putrefy: this causes the coarser hairs to fall out, leaving the fur beneath, attached to the pelt. This soft curly fur is usually dyed a deep vandyke brown, a process that takes out all the curl, and makes the fur velvety, and soft like a mole's back.

This fur-seal (*Otaria*, or sea-bear, *vide* "Leisure Hour," No. 752) has for some time annually increased in demand, for making ladies' capes, gentlemen's vests, as well as for a variety of other purposes too numerous to mention; but of late it has to some extent decreased in value. This has arisen from the admirable imitations that are now made, by removing the long hairs from the skins of the musquash, or musk-rat; the soft under fur, after passing through the magic of the dyer's craft, forms an admirable substitute, and can be profitably rendered at a third of the price usually charged by furriers for real fur-seal.

The hair-seals, *Phoca Greenlandica*, *P. oceanica*, and others, are brought principally from Newfoundland, Labrador, and Greenland. The skins are either tanned for leather, or used for the purpose of making military hats. About 400 vessels are fitted out from Newfoundland, averaging 100 tons each, employing 15,000 men; and from various other ports perhaps more than twice this number start every year, wholly for the sealing trade. The oil obtained from the blubber is the main inducement; still, we import over 700,000 seal-skins annually.

Commercially these skins are classed into blue-backs,

white-coats, hair-seal, small and large, each variety having an especial use in trade.

We need not visit the stores of the American Company, wherein we shall only see a repetition of the furs stored away in this capacious warehouse of the Hudson Bay Company. The skins the American Fur Company get the greater number of are racoon and musquash; 113,551 of the former, worth 2s. 0½d. per skin, giving a total of £11,591 13s. 3d.; and 261,078 of the latter, the price of which I do not know.

The coon skins nearly all go to the great fair at Leipsic; the best skins are brought from the western States, those from Michigan being the best. The hair felts readily, and in Germany this felt is in great demand for making hats. To a like purpose the fur of the musquash is also in a great measure appropriated.

We change the venue, as the lawyers say, and, after a short walk into St. Mary Axe, find ourselves in quite another kind of store. Here we have tiger and chetah-skins from Ceylon and India, lions' from Africa, pumas' from Costa Rica, blue foxes' from Denmark, opossum skins from Queensland. But stay: these long, black-haired affairs, like goat's skins, are really "monkeys'" hides. These skins, on their first appearance, met with a cool reception, and only 1s. each could be obtained for them. In 1860 ladies took kindly to veritable monkey-jackets, trimmings, and muffs, and up the skins went to 12s. each. The white-thighed monkey (*Colobus leucomerus*) had a hard time of it after that. Better for Jacko if the fair sex had always hated his jacket. But a reprieve soon came. Some deep hand devised a substitute in dyed goat's hair, and down again went Jacko's celebrity, and his jacket fell to a mere nominal value.

In this corner we see a goodly display of ermine-skins from Siberia, Sweden, and Norway. Somehow ermine always suggests to my mind royalty, judges, peers, popes, and cardinals. After all its grandeur, ermine is simply a number of weazel-skins craftily sewn together. The animal becomes white in winter, at which time it is killed. The tail always remains tipped with black. Every one has heard of minever, but perhaps all do not know what minever is. Let me inform such that it is only ermine thickly studded with black patches made of Astracan lamb-skin. The coronation minever robes are spotted all over, a spot to about every square inch. The spots on the minever trimmings encircling the state capes worn by peers and peeresses are in rows, and the number of rows denotes the rank of the wearer. The crown is surrounded by a band of minever, with only a single row of dots. So are the coronets of peers. The judges wear ermine, which, as most of us are aware, consists, as in minever, of a great number of skins sewn together and dotted with the black tail of the weazel in lieu of the black lamb's wool. Ermine is always sold by the *timber*, which contains forty skins. There is hardly any fur so much imitated as ermine and minever. Muffs, tippets, linings, and cuffs may be seen ticketed in shop windows in every street, surmounted with a paper banner announcing, in such huge letters that he who runs may read them, the astounding fact that this real and rare fur is to be sold a bargain. Don't believe it; the probability is that the fur-bearing animal "to be given away" by the liberal vender either wandered over the London tiles or frisked about an Ostend warren only a few months ago. Not even the tails are real, but only dyed swindles, fabricated to entrap the credulous.

We arrive at a group of boxes, just unpacked, containing Russian, Astracan, and Persian lamb-skins.

The finer lamb-skins are obtained from the foetal lambs, that, like Macduff, "were untimely cut from the mother's womb." The Astracan lamb is rich and glossy, and exactly resembles watered silk; the skins are not over six inches square, and fetch all sorts of fancy prices, from £1 upwards. The Hungarian black lamb is always in great demand in that country, for making the national coat or jacket. In summer the wool is worn outside, and the reverse way in winter. The Crimean lamb-skin is curly, and mostly used for coat and cloak collars, and cloak linings. Persian lamb is, for all the world, like a black man's head, being thickly covered with the minutest curls imaginable. It differs, however, from the negro's woolly head in being the result of a curious artificial process. No sooner does the little lamb come into the world than it is instantly sewed up in a leather bag, and tightly lashed; this prevents the curl from expanding; when the body is cold, the wool retains the extreme curliness it naturally has at birth. Some skins are dyed, others are retained in their natural colours. A great number of coarse lamb-skins are used by our cavalry, and employed as borderings to leopard, tiger, and other mounted skins. Very few of the so-called lamb-skin capes and jackets worn by ladies are natural. Machinery, steam, and skilful handicraftsmen manage to make wonderfully real-looking lamb-skins from worsted yarns; still, it answers every purpose; and what more could any reasonable person desire?

In the adjoining case to these costly lamb-skins are 2943 silver-gray and black rabbit-skins. These may, and most likely will, be transferred into imitation chinchilla, sable, and squirrel. The resources of dyers and the manufacturers of spurious furs, articles that are always sold as great bargains, are truly wonderful. Many a fair one often thinks herself clad in furs that were brought from the desolate and far-away hunting-grounds of the savage, that after all only came from the poultreer's at the corner; and the wearer may have, possibly, supped or dined off the carcass of the animal whose furred jacket keeps her warm.

Squirrel-skins are here, too, in great force, and, being difficult to imitate, and being also suitable to the tastes and pockets of the middle classes, will always be in great demand. As many as 3,000,000 have been imported in a single year.

This pile near the wall, that resembles a heap of door-mats, are skins of the Angora goat (*Capra Angorensis*). Now turn one of those skins over, the silky hair hangs in long curls, such as a water-sprite might envy. The fleece, when clipped, is locally known as "tif-tik," and weighs about 4lbs. in a full-grown goat. We know the material best as mohair, principally used at this time for mixing in with other textile matters, to make ladies' dresses, fringes, umbrellas, etc. It has also other uses; for instance, in the manufacture of Utrecht velvet linings for carriages, and plush for enveloping "Jeames's" legs. Lastly, dolls' flowing flaxen ringlets are all shorn from the Angora goat. The skin of this goat differs from the goats of Cashmere and Thibet in having no "underdown," the two latter have the felt or skin covered with a soft downy kind of wool.

The shawl goat of Cashmere is highly prized for its fleece: this goat is common in the countries west of the Caspian. Thirty ounces of shawl wool, valued at 9s., are sufficient to make a shawl a yard and a half square. You naturally ask why a Cashmere shawl should cost so much as £600. I will endeavour to tell you as briefly as I can. In the first place, a heavy duty must be paid on the wool, then on the yarn, and thirdly on the manufactured shawl. In the second place, to reach Europe,

the shawls have to be borne on the backs of men a journey of twenty days, because the route from Cashmere to the frontier of Afghanistan is impracticable for any four-footed beast. Vertical walls of rock have to be climbed by the aid of rude ladders, and deep ravines crossed by dangerous suspension-bridges, made from the roughest materials. Then, more tribute is paid at various frontier custom-houses, and hordes of bandits have to be bought off. Over the Caucasus the costly bales reach Europe *via* Russia, or through the Turkish provinces to Constantinople. Making a good Cashmere shawl is the work of years; and, little as you may be inclined to think it, the entire fabric is nothing more nor less than pieces of patch-work so cunningly joined as to defy the most rigid scrutiny to discover a seam. White shawls are made from bleached wool; but a Cashmerian dyer, if he cannot introduce sixty or seventy different tints, is, as the Yankees say, "of no account." I believe it takes three skilful workmen over two years to embroider the borders of one very fine shawl. These borders are made in separate pieces, and then exquisitely joined to the centre square. There are many other matters of detail I could tell you, but for inexorable space; still, I think the facts I have condensed will be sufficient to account for the immense price Cashmere shawls fetch in European markets. These shawls invariably form part of costly presents made by Indian princes to distinguished persons.

One storey higher, and now we are amidst large deal boxes filled with birds, skins, and feathers. 15,196 grebes bear melancholy evidence of the terrible slaughter a capricious taste or a so-styled fashion may cause amidst the harmless denizens of the land or water. Grebe-skins are worth all sorts of prices, from 7s. 6d. to £1 and upwards. I need not specify their uses: a peep into any clothing-shop, or a stroll up Regent Street on a cold day, will amply suffice. The best grebes are procured from the Lake of Geneva, but a great many are obtained from Norway, Sweden, and, I may say, from all high latitudes. Next to these are 100 scarlet ibis-skins. Ladies, ladies! why will you wear these and other poor birds' bright wings and plumes in your hats? Surely art could supply a decoration quite as becoming. If you will but think of the brilliant trogons, impian pheasants, birds of paradise, tiny humming-birds, and the hosts of others that are killed and skinned, simply to deck your hats and bonnets, as, lively, happy, and joyous, they revel amidst the tropic blossoms, or, under the shadow of some leafy trees in a less sunny clime, build their nests, and, faithful to each other, rear their baby birds, I am sure your kind hearts will prompt you at once to give no encouragement to so much waste of life, and put an end to it by never purchasing another bird's skin, wing, or plume. If it be simply and only for ornamental purposes, pray discard decoration which has to be procured by the slaughter of some unoffending member of the animal world. Even insects are not exempt. Stuck into the centre of an artificial flower, which has its representative in every road-side garden, one sees an African beetle. Surely this beetle is a useless addition to the rose, and in bad taste.

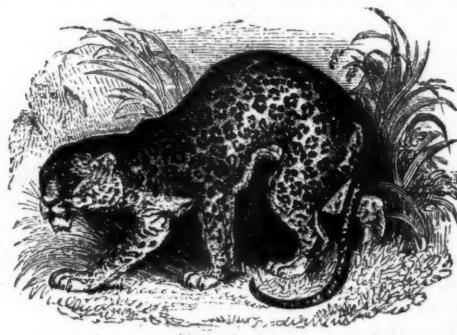
Ostrich, marabout, and egret plumes enter largely into the commerce of the feather-dealers. In 1850 3988lbs. of ostrich feathers were imported into the United Kingdom. In 1856 ladies' riding-hats, ornamented with ostrich feathers, became the fashion, and now-a-day every variety of plumage, from the body of a humming bird to a duck's wing or an owl's face, may be seen in the hats of ladies and children. As a proof of what fashion does towards the ostrich's destruction, the imports in 1861 increased to 17,871lbs. of ostrich

feathers. Ostrich feathers are extensively used—I cannot say to decorate the horses and equipages of the dead; the black tufts of feathers, like huge dusting-brushes, ranged round the sombre hearse, are surely not ornamental at any time; but their dingy ugliness is, to my mind, rendered doubly repulsive, when behind each tuft sits a greasy man, attired in seedy black, poking jokes at his neighbour. Are dirty white feathers, crisp and yellow from age and London smoke, emblems of youth and innocence? Surely clean white drapery, or black, if it be the customary emblem of mourning for maturer years, would be as effective, and, at the same time, save many a poor bird's life.

Ostrich feathers are best which are taken from the back of the male bird; next in value are those of the wings, and lastly those pulled from the tail. The feathers are prepared by first scouring them with soap and water, then bleached by sulphur, and azured with indigo; the barbs are carefully scraped down with glass, in order to give pliancy to the feather, and the filaments are curled by drawing them over the edge of a blunt knife; any fancy colour is subsequently given by dyeing. At the Cape even a more barbarous system than that of actually killing the birds is resorted to: they are actually picked alive, so to speak. The ostrich is first secured, then all the valuable feathers are plucked from out the living bird; and this refined system of barbarity is practised twice a year, in order that the cruel owner may pocket £12 10s. per bird. Surely the Humane Society ought to establish a branch agency at the Cape, if only to punish ostrich farmers. But it is in your hands, fair readers; set yourselves firmly against using the feathers, and there is at once an end of the trade. I do not cry out against the destruction of life if it be to procure useful and requisite articles for food and clothing; but when living things are wantonly sacrificed, and actual cruelty perpetrated, simply to gratify a stupid fashion, then I feel justified in pleading for the victims.

There is very much more to see; but the clock is chiming four, and a loud voice calls, "All out! all out!" Some day, perhaps, I may ask you to visit the furrier's workshops, and the dyer's magic furnaces, where I think we shall be able to while away a "leisure hour" as profitably as I trust we have, kind reader, in our ramble through the London Fur Stores.

If, at a rough estimate, we take £225,000 as the sum realized at each of these triennial sales—an estimate far below what it really is, because there are a variety of odds and ends which it is impossible to correctly calculate, and further, that the bulk of the furs are resold at Leipsic at an additional profit, and lastly, that, when dressed and manufactured, their value in retail sale is more than quadrupled,—we shall to some extent realize the vast commercial importance of the home fur trade.



THE CHEETAH.